

Vagabonding Around the World

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The urge was upon me, and there was no use in attempting to curb it longer. For six weeks I had been on the verge of realizing a desperate resolution that had been forming in my mind for the past five or six years—to go around the world, even if everything else had to be sacrificed. Giving nothing an opportunity to divert my plans, I quickly assembled my few hundred dollars, obtained the all-important passport, and secured a ridiculously cheap passage for the Orient. After caring for these details, the remainder of the journey promised to be easy.

With an old suitcase, a small haversack and the best of intentions, I boarded the *Shidzuoka Maru* at Smith Cove, Seattle, on the morning of Nov. 27, 1928. My quarters in the steerage section of the small vessel were easily found, and I was soon feeling perfectly at home with some 40 Japanese and two other Americans. Twelve hours after embarking, we were leaving the Straits and pushing out into the stormy North Pacific.

A dense and low-lying fog blanketed everything as we steamed slowly into Yokohama Harbor 16 days later. It was early morning, and my curiosity at catching a view of the shores of beautiful Nippon was not easily contained; however, patience had its reward, and by noon I was for the first time wandering along the streets of this famous Japanese seaport. It was raining, and the ubiquitous rickshaw coolies were a constant source of annoyance in their endeavor to gain a few coppers. They could not understand why a rich American (All Americans are rich to these fortunately, or perhaps better, unfortunately disillusioned creatures) should care to walk in such weather. Everyone had donned his high clogged rain shoes consisting of a piece of wood the shape of the foot, to which were fastened two thin strips of the same material about three inches in height. They went clicking along the streets in short, mincing steps. In the congested areas, especially the railway stations, their coming and going made, to the unaccustomed, a most interesting and clattering spectacle.

Tokio is only 18 miles north of Yokohama, and is much more interesting. The two other Americans with whom I had shared rice and waves for the past 16 days had concluded with me that a trip to ancient Yedo was essential to a proper start for our journeying through Japan.

The unrestrained curiosity of these Orientals was everywhere evident. Often they would assemble in small crowds and do nothing but stare. At first this habit was extremely annoying, but it took only a few days to bring on that nonchalant attitude of the most hardened traveler.

The capital of Japan has made a remarkable recovery since the disastrous earthquake of 1923. Large buildings of the American and European plan are to be found throughout the business section. Western dress is noticeable to some extent here, especially on the part of the men of the better class; few of the women have forsaken the kimona for the dress.

After a long tramp we found ourselves ambling along the Ginza, Tokio's shopping street, and certainly not the least interesting of sights to be found in this city of some 2 million people. For a good mile we walked between hundreds of small sidewalk shops where anything imaginable could be purchased. Hawkers of all sorts were in evidence. Mitsukoshi's and Matsuya's department stores proved sources of intriguing interest to us. It is to these stores that the father brings his entire family and spends the day wandering from counter to counter.

Fortunately I had persuaded the steward aboard ship to let me continue my residence thereon for the first night after arrival, and so, guided by providence and the sign language, I caught a train back to Yokohama late that night, listening to the meaningless ravings of an intoxicated gentleman next to me en route. I was dead tired from a day of intensive sight seeing, but was strongly convinced that it had proven to be the most colorful day of my life.

And thus, for almost a month, I continued to wander through Japan, visiting its fantastically constructed temples, Cryptomeria parks, colorful villages and cities, and a myriad other features that would fascinate even the most worldly-wise. At no place was there demonstrated a lack of courtesy. Everywhere the people were found to be unusually industrious and alert. Sometimes they were not entirely free from dirt, but as a rule, cleanliness was predominately in vogue.

Taking a boat from Nagasake, another American chap and I endured two days of horrible Oriental food before entering the mouth of the muddy Yangtze-Kiang and catching our first view of the shores of Asia. Shortly later we turned up the Whangpoo, the busiest river I have ever seen, and continued the 12 miles before docking in Shanghai. Every type of ship from the mightiest warships to the tiny sampan, is to be found here. Freighters under the flags of all the principal countries of the globe come to load cargo, for Shanghai is the second busiest port in the world. Boats packed to capacity with hordes of Asiatics are always coming and going.

At first glance one would think Shanghai to be a western city—only until the boat is left behind, however, for the atmosphere of the East is of unmistakable character. From the outset it is a steady fight to keep the beggars off, and forcefully convince a legion of half-starved coolies that you are physically able to walk and carry an insignificant amount of baggage.

In this great city one encounters the extremes of life and customs. Poverty and wealth are side by side. Modern American-styled buildings are but a stone's throw from ancient temples; and white, yellow and brown people are to be seen on all sides.

Shanghai's Big and Little money was a constant source of trouble to me. Every time a purchase was made, a handful of heavy coppers came back as change. There are some 500 of these to our dollar—the number changing from day to day.

But even Shanghai and vicinity began to grow a bit tiresome after a few days of very interesting experiences, so I boarded the *Atsuta Maru* and spent four of the most perfect days at sea of which a ship's captain ever dreamed. I was the only English speaking individual in the entire hold of the vessel, but one could never have asked for more interesting travelling companions. There were some 50 Mohammedans on their way to Singapore among these. The nights were beginning to assume the tropical grandeur that makes the hours of darkness at sea unforgettable. Throughout the entire 24 hours we were able to lie out on the hatch with only a sleeveless shirt and thin trousers for protection.

It was from peaceful slumbers that I was awakened on the fourth morning by one of these Mohammedans in order that I might watch the approach of Hong Kong and its beautiful harbor. Consisting of a mountainous island rising 1500 feet above the sea, the city makes an impressive sight. Buildings that appear to be part of the rugged cliffs themselves, dot the entire mountainside.

Hong Kong has one of the most beautiful harbors in the world. The lights of the city and the ships coming and going at night as viewed from Kowloon just across the bay, is a spectacle indelibly impressed on the memory of all visitors. Even better than this is the view afforded from the Peak, which is reached either by a cable railway or a long, winding highway.

It was in Hong Kong that I met Pete, the representative of a woolen concern in Holland. He proved to be a very interesting travelling companion, and one with whom I spent some of the most enjoyable hours of my trip. Together we visited about everything of importance in the vicinity of Hong Kong, including squalor in all of its forms. Being just below the Tropic of Cancer, it is never cold here, and at night the streets are lined with natives sprawled out on the sidewalks asleep. At five

o'clock in the morning they are routed out to make way for pedestrians and other traffic.

Two weeks after landing at Hong Kong I was saying goodbye to it and my newly made friends. A small Japanese vessel carried me safely over the China Sea to Manila. We rode the tail end of one of the typhoons for which this part of the world is famous, but by sleeping out on the hatch and avoiding the hot stuffy hold of the ship, seasickness was avoided fairly well. My sea legs, that were so well developed on the Pacific, had become a bit shaky after several weeks on land.

Turkish baths were unavoidable in Manila. My impressions of Luzon are still steamy. After a few minutes of exertion the perspiration was streaming off most uncomfortably. But the unique old walled city and the undefinable lure of tropical climes blotted away the unpleasantness of it all and made my visit there a thing long to be remembered.

But there were many more countries ahead, so I was soon promenading the cargo decks and living as carefree a life as anyone possibly could.

For days the ship chugged persistently southward past countless islands of the Phillippine Archipelago. Oftentimes we were within a few hundred yards of the densely timbered shores, and occasionally were able to distinguish native villages and people. Tropical squalls were common but usually the sea was like oil, with barely a ripple. The nights were unsurpassable in beauty. Reclined against a large coil of rope I used to sit for hours at the rear of the ship and watch the livid phosphorescence in our wake. The only noise of any kind, aside from the steady churning of the water, was the faint whistling of a balmy breeze in the rigging and the regular toll of the ship's bell. Steadily the Great Dipper was receding to the north and the Southern Cross was rising in the south.

Just often enough to break the monotony, calls were made at strange and fascinating ports with more chances to suffer under a tropical sun. Two weeks after leaving Manila the Great Barrier Reef off the North East Coast of Australia was reached. Navigation is very hazardous here because of the millions of tiny coral islands. A special pilot had been taken on at Thursday Island for this 1000-mile run to Brisbane.

Brisbane and Sidney are half English and half American in appearance, but the language is unmistakably English. Sidney's greatest asset is its spacious harbor, to say nothing of its beautiful beaches. My three British friends and I spent many enjoyable nights at the latter.

Hobart, Tasmania, backed up against Mt. Wellington, is one of the most beautiful spots I have ever seen. At almost 45 degrees south latitude it has a climate similar to the Middle West.

It is adjacent to large Eucalyptus forests and the home of the giant fern. Some English boys and I spent two days exploring the vicinity most thoroughly.

Five weeks after reaching Australia I sailed from Fremantle, arriving in Ceylon some ten days later. Many widely travelled people agree that this is the most beautiful tropical island in the world. How one could be more so is hard to conceive, for it is everything of which story tellers write. Colombo with its palm fringed bay, Mt. Lavinia, Kandi, and a dozen other spots leave pleasant memories. It is here that the east bound traveler first meets the rickshaw. Betel nut chewing is the most noticeable habit of the natives, and is made plainly evident by the many black teeth of participants and by conspicuous red splotches in the streets.

With new buddies I continued on toward the West, through the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and Suez Canal. En route through the latter we saw many unusual sights and were constantly pestered by hawkers with their worthless jewelry. With Egypt I will always associate the hawker and flies, for they are practically unavoidable at any turn on the street.

The Mediterranean which is usually warm, was quite chilly the entire distance from Port Said to Naples and we shivered past the snow-capped mountains of Crete. Passing through the Straits of Messina we were able to get a splendid view of Etna on the mainland of Sardinia, in eruption. Late that night a red glow in the eastern sky indicated the location of Stromboli in Italy proper.

When in Naples, all visitors see Pompei and Vesuvius, and they are well worth the day it takes to visit them. Aside from these and the Blue Grotto, there is not a great deal to be seen here.

From here we skirted the French Riviera, touching at Toulon, and were soon basking in Gibraltar sunlight. The latter was a reality that would have been greatly appreciated some 10 days later when I was shivering in a London fog. To get the best view of this famous rock it is necessary to walk across the frontier into Spain and gaze back toward the south. Its massive cliffs are as impregnable as any earthly spot could be.

It is a short, and unusually rough, three days journey from Gibraltar to London; so I was soon walking the circuses and streets of this great metropolis and, in spite of the cold, I liked it so well that it was 16 days before it was possible for me to get away. I was fortunate in making the acquaintance of a young American chap here—we agreed to do at least a part of the continent together.

Ten days gave us our fill of Paris, but it took a month in Switzerland before we even thought of leaving. The Alps were

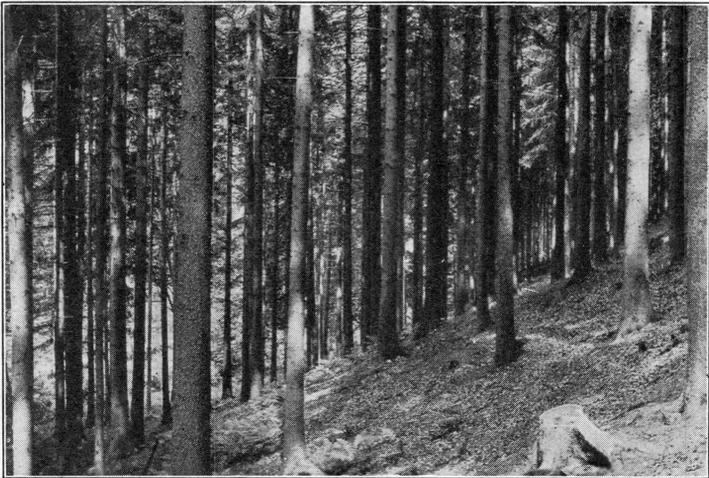
beautiful and the people were very courteous. Finally we parted in Interlaken and I started for Italy.

The Milan Cathedral, the Forum, St. Peters and Venice were sources of much interest, but I was not particularly sorry when the Austrian frontier had been crossed and my train was approaching Vienna. Salzburg, with its old castles, Munich and its vast beer gardens, Zurich and its forests, Heidelberg, The Rhine, Holland, Belgium, the Battlefields and finally Paris again brought to an end my vagabonding on the continent.

Shortly later I returned to London and after a very interesting drive by car through Central England and the Lake Country I found myself in dear old Scotland. But it was only a week until I was gliding down the historic Clyde and away from Glasgow.

On the morning of the tenth day out, the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan appeared through the fog of New York Harbor, and in thirty minutes we were docking alongside good old terra firma.

It was hot. New York was dirty and I was tired but there could be no denying that the feel of old U. S. A. under my feet once more was a mighty welcome experience. Even having to pay as high as \$2 a day for hotel rooms again could not extinguish my joys.



Norway Spruce in Germany on a 100-Year Rotation.